**3 Awesome Teen Entrepreneurs Who Will Put You to Shame**

What were you doing at 18 years old? Oh, playing video games? Well, here's what you could have accomplished.

Meet Andres Cardona (r.), Charlizza Harris, and Aden Shank, three teen entrepreneurs honored by the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship.

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The [Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship](http://www.nfte.com/) honored 33 enterprising teen entrepreneurs this week at its first annual Dare to Dream awards dinner in New York City.

The kids, jittery and dressed in their best, came from all over the world—Colombia, China, Germany, and around the United States—to receive the awards and share their businesses with fellow honorees. They were selected as stand-out entrepreneurs by NFTE, a non-profit organization that teaches low-income students entrepreneurial skills. It operates local chapters in 50 countries.

Before the fancy dinner, hosted by MSBC anchor Willie Geist and FUBU founder Daymond John, the kids set up science fair-style booths showing off their businesses. A crowd of about 200 teachers and program supporters made the rounds to each, chatting with the teenpreneurs while sipping champagne (irking some of the under-21 up-starts).

While each teen had a compelling story, and often an even more compelling business, here are three that really knocked our socks off.

**1. Aden Shank, founder of Cheer Launcher**

Aden Shank's start-up story begins with a recent pep rally at his Dallas high school.

"We were in the gym and the cheerleaders were throwing prizes into the crowd. But I was in the fifth row, so I never got anything, because, well, cheerleaders aren't really known for having good throwing arms," says Shank, who has a charming dry humor. "So I decided to make something to solve this problem."

What he made was the Cheer Launcher: A cross-bow that allows cheerleaders to launch tubes filled with candy and prizes further into the crowd. He sells the cross-bow for $99, and emphatically reminds everyone that traditional cannnons—his market competition—that are typically used to shoot prizes into crowds at professional sporting events, cost around $2,000.

He sourced the materials from around his hometown—the bow, for example, is made from an elastic material that's used for medical devices and the shank is made from PVC pipes, which he cuts and crafts himself.  His mom, a graphic designer, helps with his marketing and brochures. The NFTE class he was taking at school helped him flesh out a business plan.

"I've sold 10 so far, some in Dallas and a few in Houston," says Shank, who suffers from dyslexia and an auditory processing disorder. "I'm making about $60 per Cheer Launcher, so the margins are pretty good. I want to expand."

**2. Andres Cardona, founder of South Miami Basketball Academy**

At 14-years-old, Andres Cardona loved basketball so much he decided to start an academy for his South Miami, Florida, community.

"I wanted to let other kids who've gone through trauma in life to have an outlet for their problems," says Cardona, now 18-years-old. At the awards dinner, he was asked to speak on stage with Daymond John about the academy, and garnered a standing ovation.

The program, which teaches basketball skills as well as physical fitness, is free for kids (8- to 18-years-old) and he started with just a dozen. Now, the academy has 65 local kids participating.

"We don't take money from the kids, I want it to be free. But we do competitions and tournaments, for example, to get some revenue," says Cardona, adding with a smirk, "One of my competitors approached me about buying us, but I don't want to sell or give it up." (Which competitor? "I can't tell you that. It's a secret," he says.)

Cardona joined the NFTE program when his mother lost her job, and decided he was going to help the family financially. Today he's a freshman at Florida International University double majoring in finance and marketing.

**3. Charizza Harris, founder of Two Face Drama**

Growing up in a rough part of Lower Hutt, New Zealand, Charlizza Harris got involved in a local theater program.

"It helped me come out of my shell," the 18-year-old says.

Once she took an NFTE course, she put two and two together and voila: Two Face Drama, a non-profit organization that runs acting and performing arts workshops for struggling teens.

"I work with five volunteers and we write and direct plays and short films," she says. "The works are mostly centered around bullying and other hard issues that teens face everyday."

After a workshop is finished, Harris sells DVDs of the performances. She now works with 30 kids from eight schools in her area.

"I definitely want to pursue this full-time after high school," she adds.